

VZCZCXRO6964
PP RUEHAG RUEHKW RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHBS #0284/01 0611456
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 021456Z MAR 09
FM USEU BRUSSELS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO RUCNMUC/EU CANDIDATE STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 000284

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/01/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [BK](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIANS SEEKING U.S. SUPPORT ON BOSNIA TRANSITION

REF: BRUSSELS 277

Classified By: CDA Christopher Murray for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: In a lunch meeting with the Charge March 2, Italian PSC Ambassador Andrea Meloni sought U.S. support for changes to the international community's political and military posture in Bosnia. Fearing a loss of EU credibility in Bosnia if a new EUSR were not appointed quickly, Meloni said that Italy was interested in moving forward with Austrian candidate Valentin Inszko to succeed Miroslav Lajcak. Meloni expressed Italy's desire to see the PIC decide at its June meeting to close the OHR and transition to an "enhanced" or "reinforced" EUSR. Concerning EUFOR, Meloni said that Italy welcomed a transition to a non-executive training and mentoring mission of 200-300 personnel. Regionally, Meloni said that the current financial crisis greatly worried his government, characterizing the possible decision of the UK to considerably reduce its staffing in EULEX Kosovo and other international missions as a "precedent others might follow." End summary.

OHR Transition

12. (C) Hosting a lunch for the Charge and Poloffs March 2, Italian PSC Ambassador Andrea Meloni sought U.S. support for changes to the international community's political and military posture in Bosnia. Meloni said that Italy was keen to have Austrian candidate Valentin Inszko succeed Miroslav Lajcak as EU Special Representative (EUSR) in Bosnia. He reported that Italy was interested in moving quickly for two reasons. First, Meloni said that the EU would lose credibility if the post were left vacant for too long, possibly encouraging further political instability on the ground. Second, the Italians are concerned that if Inszko is not ultimately selected for the role after HR Solana announced during the February GAERC that Inszko was his choice (reftel), smaller EU Member States might resent what they would see as the rules being bent to accommodate the wishes of larger Member States.

13. (C) Concerning a possible OHR closure and transition to an "enhanced" or "reinforced" EUSR, Meloni reported that his government thought a decision to do so could be reached at the June PIC meeting. While noting recent progress on Brcko, Meloni said that it was not realistic to expect the issues of state and defense property to be resolved by the March PIC meeting given that inventories and other administrative steps were necessary. Meloni reported that the European Commission and Council Secretariat were working with the Member States through COWEB to flesh out the responsibilities of the new EUSR and what tools would be available to him. He said that the EU's greatest sources of leverage existed probably

existed in the form of visa liberalization and IPA funding, both of which could be used as tools to encourage cooperation on the ground.

EUFOR

¶4. (C) With regard to EUFOR, Meloni said that Italy welcomed a transition to a non-executive training and mentoring mission of some 200-300 personnel and maintaining a NATO headquarters staff of some 80 personnel. Saying that it was his government's view that the military tasks of EUFOR had largely been accomplished over nine months ago, Meloni argued that greater clarity on the issue would be necessary as summer approached, since many contributing states were contemplating unilateral withdrawals. Meloni said that Italy was currently working to persuade Spain, EUFOR's largest troop contributor, not to follow France's lead (France unilaterally decided that it would withdraw its approximately 80 personnel by summer, according to Meloni).

Financial Crisis

¶5. (C) Regionally, Meloni said that the current financial crisis greatly worried his government as it might lead other Member States - especially newer Member States - to reevaluate their commitments abroad. Meloni characterized the possible decision by the UK to reduce its staffing in EULEX Kosovo and other international missions as a "precedent others might follow."

BRUSSELS 00000284 002 OF 002

Comment

¶6. (C) Within the EU there are at present two schools of thought as to how to move forward on Bosnia. While Member States such as the UK advocate firmness and more of a carrots-and-sticks approach, others - to include Italy - are guided by a more hands-off approach which seeks to empower local actors. Meloni's message and approach struck us as being part of an orchestrated effort to get others engaged on Bosnia, preferably adopting the latter approach. While on the one hand highlighting the dangers of delay and uncertainty, Meloni's pitch for a rapid reconfiguration of the EU's political and military presence lacked specifics and seemed to be driven out of frustration over the lack of forward progress on the ground. Most proponents of the hands off approach share this sense of frustration, believing that any change is better than the present. The Italians seem to be undertaking a campaign to bring others around to their point of view, using their desire to see a quick designation of a new EUSR as the opener. We sensed that Meloni's short-notice luncheon invitation to Charge and Mission Poloffs was part of a concerted Italian campaign to bring Bosnia back into the first order of issues for U.S. and European collaboration.

MURRAY

.